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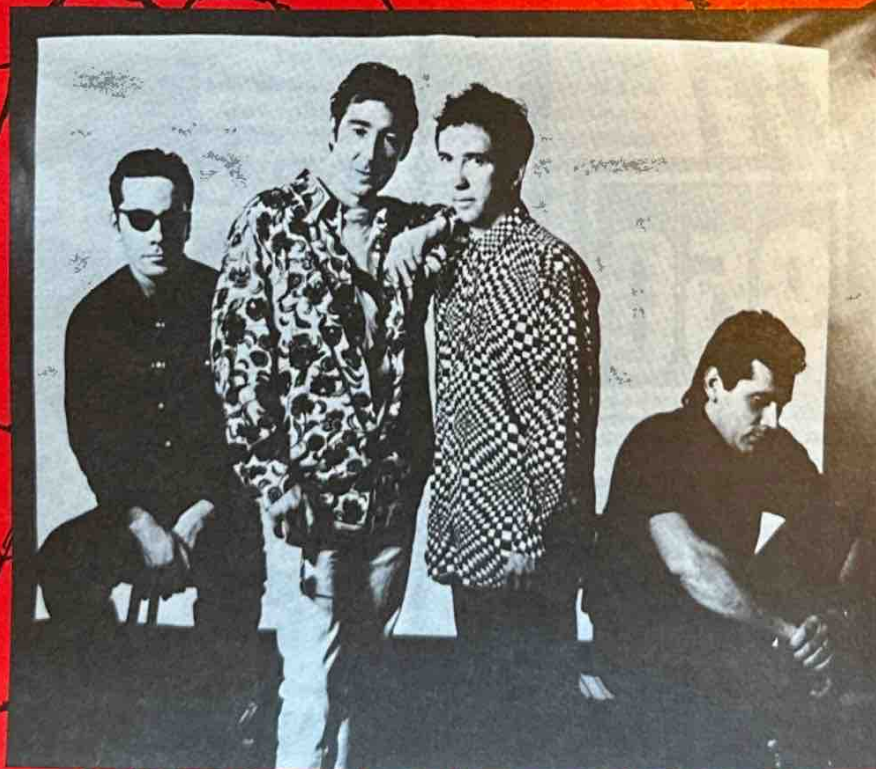
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It is perhaps the ultimate achievement for an artist to create a new genre and then to inspire countless numbers of imitators. Among the few bands that have accomplished this are the Velvet Underground, the Stooges, Led Zeppelin, the Sex Pistols and the Ramones. While these bands have been given the credit due to them, others have not. In this latter group must be counted Manchester's Buzzcocks, purveyors of the "iron glove over the velvet fist" love song.

Turning the clock back to 1976, one can divide the practitioners of the reborn "fast and loud" style of noisemaking into two camps, whose boundaries were actually not that clearly defined. Political motives were a major presence, ranging from the Sex Pistols' brand of idle "get pissed—destroy" malevolence to the bitter and more frightening rants of the Clash. The other side of the coin was the purification of the "do it yourself"—D.I.Y.—philosophy, which entailed the abandonment of any artistic pretension and the embracing of "Noise Noise Noise" (in the personage of the Damned) or, in America, the "Blitzkrieg Bop" of the Ramones. What fell between the cracks at the time was the love song. There seemed to be little room for any honest emotion besides anger in the fledgling punk movement.

Enter Buzzcocks. Although nihilism was present in their music, it took neither the sour form of anarchy or revolution, nor the simple and not-so-compelling guise of complete, comic rejection of any and all values. This music was playful, yet brutal; resigned, yet hopeful; pessimistic, yet inspiring. Burning themselves out, as all great artists do, in a brief time, but leaving behind a body of work that is slowly but surely being feted as classic, the Buzzcocks deserve their place among the aforementioned greats.

The following conversation between WHPK's Carl Falstrom and Mark Josephson, and Buzzcocks' singer/guitarist/songwriter Peter Shelley took place in November 1989, after their reunion in Chicago. The band had arrived very late (at around the time they were scheduled to appear, 9:30), and did not have the benefit of a sound check. Shelley was very tired, but agreed to grant us ten minutes. We pick up the conversation as Shelley responds to Carl's dismay at the relative ferocity of the dancers in the "pit" fronting the stage...

Pete: It's the physical act of dancing, which is the fun part. Even though it may look pretty, to see people dancing...I mean, I can see people breakdancing, right? You think, "Oh, that looks very good, it's nice of them to do that," but for them to actually do it as well, they may get the fun out of doing it. It's the same with a song. I enjoy myself, because I'm

TELLING FRIENDS

singing it, 'cause it's a physical act, which links together all the little things, so it's almost a mental thing.

Carl: People pay their money, and they have a right to do things that they're gonna do. How does it feel to look out in the crowd and see people like me? I mean, I was eight years old when "Spiral Scratch" came out.

Pete: Fun...just the way it ought to be, really.

Carl: Would you say that you're more popular now than you were while you were still recording?

Pete: When we were recording stuff, people were catching up, 'cause we came over to the States really late, came over at the end of '79. We only did three tours: the last was in 1980, and we finished in early '81. So really, people have had the chance to catch up. People always said Buzzcocks were ahead of the times.

Carl: So they've caught up to you now?

Pete: Well, no, I don't think so. I don't think as a "mass" thing, but I think the people who have been touched by all we've done are actually at the stage now where there's a lot more than there were before, and I think that's the only way you can actually go forward. In fact, the name of the tour is "Telling Friends", 'cause the idea is that people will tell their friends and introduce them to what we do, and out of that, then, they can tell other people. It's almost like a chain letter, you know. It goes on and on and on, but it's got a limit to it.

Carl: What size audiences did you play to in '79?

Pete: Oh, I have no idea.

Carl: Was it like it was tonight?

Pete: Mmmm...

Carl: It was sold out.

Pete: It was sold out and some more tonight. It was, as they say in the trade, "rubber walled" (chuckles)

Carl: We hear a lot about how bands got started back then. Maybe you don't want to talk about this—you get asked about this a lot, I'm sure...

Pete: Well, it's actually a long story. It was all by accident—there were no auditions, or things like that.

Carl: But it all stemmed from the Sex Pistols. Everybody wanted to start a band...

Pete: Well, it was during that time that me and Howard Devoto wanted to start a band. We saw the Sex Pistols to find out how they did it, and so we thought, "Yeah, we could do it as well." I mean, we had lots of similarities then—for example, where we were coming from—and so it just made it easier to do, knowing that someone had actually done it.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



It's always hard when you're on your own, and you think, nobody else in the world is actually doing what you're doing at all. You think that you're isolated. But once you meet up with other people—get to know about other people who can do things that you want to do—then it gives you more impetus to go ahead and do it, and not feel afraid.

Mark: Does it seem odd to you when you sing songs you wrote eight or nine years ago, longer than that? How do you feel singing stuff like that that can't really mean the same thing anymore?

Pete: No, no, it means more, because of the experiences I've had since I wrote it. It's been—what, almost, going on twelve years since I wrote "What Do I Get?" It's been over twelve years. (really fast) "I just want a lover like any other/what do I get?" So then, it could be seen as me just being naive. Now, when I sing it, it has a lot more meaning, because of the current crises in human relationships, i.e., AIDS and things like that. It actually means more, more of a statement—a sort of a plea from the heart—than it meant then.

Carl: How did this tour come about? I know about Product, but there's been a spate of people from that time getting back together and touring.

Pete: The way we got back together began by almost an accident. There was a rumor going around that we were back together...

Carl: Did that have to do with the thing in Manchester (the Festival of the Tenth Summer, commemorating the tenth anniversary of punk)?

Pete: No, it had to do with Steve Diggle

changing the name of his band from Flag of Convenience to Buzzcocks-F.O.C., and as soon as news of that spread around, people thought that Buzzcocks were playing again, and so there was interest from promoters. During the New Music Seminar, my manager was speaking to a promoter. He said, "What's happening? Anything out there?" I said, "Well, there's been all these offers coming in [about a tour]." He said, "Well, you do it with me." He came back a couple of weeks later with an idea for a tour, this tour. It was quite natural.

Carl: You don't share Howard's idea of a tour. I asked him about a tour like this, and he said, "No, that would be nostalgia, really, and there's no point to that."

Pete: It's something that people who are cynical or skeptical can say is nostalgia, but you've seen how it was tonight, and there's no nostalgia there. People are actually living in the present, people are actually responding in the present and enjoying themselves in the present. There's nobody around going, "Oh, yeah, those were the days, it's a pity they don't happen now." You know, people have got something which is here and now and hopefully going into the future. It blows away nostalgia.

Carl: Having seen it tonight, I would have to agree. What do you think of the Fine Young Cannibals (who covered Buzzcocks' "Ever Fallen in Love")? I have to ask you that; I'm sure a lot of people have.

Pete: Yes, they have, and when they ask me, they always expect me to say (slight whine) "I don't like it."

Carl: I want to hear what you really think.
Pete: I thought it was fine. I didn't find things wrong with it. By asking that question, I can rest assured that you don't think it was as good as the Buzzcocks' one, do you?

Carl: Well, no, I don't.

Pete: Well, there you are, see? That's it. I sussed you out. (laughs)

Carl: Have you written any new Buzzcocks songs yet?

Pete: No, no, we've only been together for the three weeks, so there's not been all that much time to get any new stuff together. We know that something will happen, because we're so...used to each other, musically, and also we've all become better musicians in the intervening nine years, and we're all enjoying it, so all our energies are being channeled into this now, so I'm sure something will come up. But for the moment, we don't have any record contract, or anything like that, so...I mean, it's still a bit premature. We can't say, yes, there's an album coming out three weeks' time, 'cause there isn't. (laughs)

Mark: How many songs are you playing on this tour? Did you find it that easy to start replaying the whole catalog again after only three days?

Pete: Well, I mean, after two days we had twenty-four songs.

Carl: Did you do anything tonight for the first time?

Pete: No. We only included "Orgasm Addict" three or four days ago; I forgot one chord.

Carl: I have to ask you...I have a tape of the Time's Up bootleg. Do you have anything against the people who put it out?

Pete: It's always good to have things like that come out. The only thing I object to is when the people who buy it have to pay exorbitant prices. I'd rather people made cassettes and gave them away or sold them cheap.

Carl: There are some bands who don't like people to hear them when they were in their formative stage.

Pete: Some bands don't have much confidence in themselves, perhaps. Sometimes it is a big rip-off. People do make a lot of money and therefore people get a bit edgy...Well, I'm not doing this for the money.

Carl: I'm glad to hear that.

Mark: This is a question that a friend of mine demanded that I ask. How did you manage to get the drum in "Late for the Train" to sound the way it did?

Pete: (laughs) Ahh, that's a secret.

Carl: A trade secret?

Pete: Well, it started off as a track we did for a John Peel session, and I think we did use delays at some point. But, after a while, John [Maher] was able to play it really fast. He can now play it like it sounds.

BRINGING THAT BEAT BACK

Although Chicago has played a major role in the development of jazz and house music, local musicians and deejays alike have had to build their reputations elsewhere before bringing home recognition of the city's creative talents. To stay and continue producing music is to lack adequate press, performance space and audience. To leave means the potential of reaching a wider public at the risk of detachment from the creative environment. One jazz artist, though, not only continues to center his operations here, but also has a unique vision of combining the two forms of music to build a new audience.

The prospects of such a project can be judged by the credentials of the artist, jazz drummer **Kahil El'Zabar**, a native of Chicago. Working with AACM notables like Malachi Favors and Edward Wilkerson, El'Zabar articulates a singular Chicago voice through his ensembles, The Ritual Trio and The Ethnic Heritage Ensemble. El'Zabar also calls together the annual Underground Fest, and organizes other events. His more formally distinguished roles include being a board member of the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Meet the Composer and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

So what could El'Zabar possibly borrow from house artists? And how did he get the idea of combining the two forms of music?

"A friend of mine was an owner of La Mirage, and I was going to the club to hang with him. I started going upstairs to check out the dancefloor. Certain energies of the young people there reminded me of myself in the sixties. It was different then; I was expressing my Africanness, which was a newfound source of strength and inspiration, and these kids [in La Mirage] were expressing house, but the clothes were very similar to the clothes I was wearing, and the haircuts were similar. The openness of emotional energy and a certain drive and fire, were something I felt very close to.

"A younger audience needs to be developed for serious directions in creative music, but there has to be some kind of bridge. The body dances, and there's a joy, but the mind also dances. I enjoy the pictures I see of folks lindy-hopping and knowing that that was done to be-hop and trying to imagine what that experience must have been about. The horn player would do a progression and the dancer would effect and move according to that. The drummer would drop a beat, or add a beat, and the dancers would respond. That kind of thing has been missing from jazz.

"So I started to get the idea of working out some of my musical ideas against that, and I

got together a band. Originally the band was called BE-AT, from 'beat'. It was a thirteen-piece thing."

But you won't find El'Zabar laboring in the warehouses, like Frankie Knuckles did for years.

"We did some live performances at La Mirage and Links. There was success every time we played. I did some things in the studio and I spent my own money, but then expenses were realized and I had to scale things down a bit. I went around to a few record companies, but I don't think they were ready for the kind of thing I wanted to do: an African bottom filled in with house and layered with improvisation. So I started to get together with some other folks. I got together with Ten City, Marshall Jefferson and Kym Mazelle, and I was really getting involved in the feelings of house. I didn't want it to be a thing of some creative musician making a cute attempt. I wanted a sincere effort to relate to dance and improvisation."

El'Zabar had to put the house project on a back burner for four years though, because of the success of The Ritual Trio and the Ethnic Heritage Ensemble.

"What my band is called now is the Afrocentrics, which is where it was in the beginning. That was the whole feeling I was trying to express, so that should be the name of the band. It's a seven-to-ten piece ensemble. There's two percussionists besides myself, a keyboardist, a sax player and some other instrumentalists. We're working on some new material now and we've got plans to do a few shows here this spring, and then take the music to England and Germany this summer."

Which brings us to the point: why perform in Europe when presenting a new idea?

"In Chicago, there's an insecurity towards its own identity and the press is a prime example. When you've got people like Jack DeJohnette, Eddie Harris, Chaka Kahn, Von Freeman... There's just too many substantive artists that have trailblazed and inspired audiences here without the support of the so-called powers-that-be that could make something happen. It's like *Downbeat* is in Chicago, but from the covers of the magazine, it's clear the magazine feels there's no strong interest [in Chicago jazz], and historically, that's incorrect, because so much music over the years has come from here that it merits a certain acknowledgement that it doesn't get. If someone's written something in the *Tribune* or in the *Sun-Times*, it's usually about someone who's not here, or it's special. But that's like disacknowledging all of the specialness that happens here all of the time."

So what effect does this have on the jazz scene in Chicago?

"Chicago does have a consistency of venues, but the scene fails to receive any recognition. It's almost like the city is saying, 'If you're that good, then you need to leave here, because we don't deserve anything that good.'

"My personal opinion is that [for the artist], it's counterproductive because if you're not writing or not trying to find a way to put things on the airwaves, then you limit your [earning] potential as well, because you're not creating an interest, which [in turn] creates a greater demand for what you're doing. So a stigma seems to have developed with artists and with writers and producers alike, that [the creative environment] is a bohemian-type of hermit environment which not many people will understand. That attitude creates a distance from what the general public could possibly be accessible to.

"The celebration of creation is extremely limited in this environment. It's really not a celebration in the attitude of people. You find few individuals who are able to withstand the bombardment of insecurity and doubt about their function and their work, so most people give up, or if they have an undying desire to do it, they leave."

But what makes other areas, such as New York or Europe, so much more favorable towards new music?

"Well, in Europe there are avenues to market non-pop-oriented entertainment. There are a few serious agents who make a living by doing it, so they're going to do everything they can to do it well so they can keep on making a living. Also, in Europe, you're pretty much guaranteed press, and the pirate radio stations play your stuff a lot more. Those variables create a serious interest.

"Look at New York, where two guys opened the Knitting Factory a year and a half ago, and it's turned into a phenomenon. That's because the mechanism of the press that exists in New York is supportive in a way that can inspire the patron of the arts. The Knitting Factory is a product of consistency and acknowledgement from the population, who put the word out. And the word goes out so consistently in New York, that one is in the habit of responding. The word is so inconsistently put out in this city that it never gets the time to develop the public to respond. When something comes out, it's so occasional. In the last year, I've had pretty good press in this city, but it was based on stuff that I was doing

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KAHIL continued

everyplace else. Or else it wasn't on me, it might be on David Murray (of the World Saxophone Quartet), because of the work we were doing together."

And yet, prominent individuals in jazz, such as Chico Freeman and Lester Bowie,

started in Chicago, not to mention house artists Mr. Lee and Fast Eddie.

"The life of a musician in this city is hard, but a lot of strong people also came out of this environment. Going towards the 21st century, with the overcrowding of cities, New York can no longer support all the refined and

developed artists. Many other cities with a strong body of artists have to start relying on the value of their own environment and increasing the momentum of enthusiasm which will hopefully develop a greater body of support through time; this really would enhance New York.

"A lot of times, what people in New York are discussing is where other things are happening. Usually, like in this period of New York, some of the things that are extremely popular actually came from the Midwest. But now another generation has reassessed that and they're recognizing these things as something that had been created in an earlier period [in Chicago]. No one has yet realized, however, that environment had a lot to do with it or it wouldn't have happened here. That makes the social environment very important."

If everything works according to plan, Kahil El'Zabar may just yet make Chicago the kind of place that supports its creative musicians rather than ignores them. Mr. Lee and Fast Eddie had to cross the Atlantic to get noticed here; maybe an interaction with the house scene will give Chicago jazz artists the exposure they need. Whatever the case, El'Zabar ensures, "I just know it's going to be live!"

—Rick Wojcik and Mae Lum

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IN THERAPY WITH PANKOW

Because of their European success and limited American exposure, **Pankow** is often preconceived as part of the European electronic sound. What belies this notion is their nonreliance on voice samples of psychotic politicians or evangelists. Their music—uptempo hard-hitting drums and intricate arrays of keyboards and samplers—interacts with personal observations on the environment and the thought processes within. **WHPK's** **Joey Hernandez** talked with singer **Alex Spalck** before **Pankow's** show in Chicago as part of their world tour.

Joey: I wanted to ask about the decision-making behind the limited edition copies of *Gisela*.

Alex: *Gisela* was a record with a marble cover [and] a gold inscription. The limited edition was a hundred copies and it was sold in a couple of months. It was quite a fun idea of our label back in Florence, Contempo Records. We didn't have much to do with it. I mean, we liked the idea. I would have liked to have a copy in my house but they didn't give us anything. (laughs)

Joey: Was the marble much more affordable in Italy?

Alex: I don't think so. I know they sold it for 400,000, and maybe more, lire.

Joey: Then it's cheaper here. I've seen two copies in Chicago and they go for about 300 dollars (or about 360,000 lire).

Alex: (modestly laughing) It depends ...on the affection of the fans. If they really

want to buy it, I fear our label tries to speculate on it.

Joey: **Pankow** has also appeared on *Razor-maid Records* (a dj remix label of progressive dance music), with "Sickness Takin' Over" and "Me and My Ding Dong", and on *BBAT* (*Between Body and Thigh*) *Records* (a division of *Contempo Records*). Is *Hardsonic Bottom 3* an alias for **Pankow** when it gets more frivolous, like covering "Disco Inferno"?

Alex: It's an idea of Maurizio's. Maurizio Fazoli is the keyboard of **Pankow** and the real founder of the band. This label [BBAT] appeared for electronic records which are a bit more 'pop' and a little funnier. For example, records of *Hardsonic Bottom 3*. That's a ghost group of **Pankow** and Maurizio, and another band called *Santa B-Boys*. [Santa B-Boys] are another band of Maurizio's. It's an attempt to explore new markets. When

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PANKOW continued

Maurizio has time, he likes to do cover versions of old disco hits.

Joey: You do the vocals for Hardsonic Bottom 3 as well?

Alex: Yes, well... (laughs) We listen to such a broad range of music. That's his particular taste; my taste is quite different.

Joey: And your taste is...

Alex: I think as an electronic band, we were naturally influenced by bands like Kraftwerk and DAF, and also the old German electronic bands of the '70s, Tangerine Dream and so on. I personally was more influenced by bands like El and other German bands at the beginning of the Eighties. But I don't listen to those kinds of records anymore. For example, industrial music: Maurizio is a big fan of Throbbing Gristle. He's got all their tapes and records. He's the only member of the band that's 100 percent into electronic music. Today, he's more into listening to American hip-hop than European electronic bands. The other members of the band are listening to everything from Pink Floyd to Frank Zappa, Tom Waits to Ricki Lee Jones. And while we're travelling in the USA, we're used to listening to Guns and Roses. Because it's very helpful on the freeways.

Joey: As for the last album, Gisela, you're working less with Adrian Sherwood, who used to engineer and mix almost all of your work.

Alex: On our first album, and also on the beginning of our second album, we were working with Adrian Sherwood. But there were some problems with him, because he tried to overshadow us. So we decided to try another experienced mixer. We contacted another English mixer, Rico Conning, and when we finished *Gisela*, we thought he did a real great job. So we're going to work with him in the future.

Joey: The lyrics—or the stories or poetic feelings that are invoked by your music—are of a lost society.

Alex: It probably has to do with the fact that I'm studying medicine in psychiatry. I have to deal with everyday mental disease, people with problems and sickness. (gesturing with hands) So it's quite interesting to explore the possibilities of the human brain and how far it can possibly go without hurting other people. And what are the limits of our imagination. How much education and morals can we chain to our own strength and your own possibilities of development. Your dreams...and your reality. I try to convert my interests into lyrics. And I try to identify myself in these problems. It's not so difficult because I have problems myself.

Joey: Are the sexual expressions from past experiences too?

Alex: Yeah, sex is of course one of the most interesting activities of life. (caressing beer bottle) It offers so many possibilities. (coughs

and sips beer) We always have to deal with moral issues. I think it's quite nice ground to explore. And everybody has their own problems; they can be [either] particularly big or insignificant. When I talk about myself, I try to be very sincere. It's a kind of therapy to express my problems with relationships with women, and my doubts and so on. For example, what comes out in the lyrics of "Me and My Ding Dong" or "I'm Lost Little Girl".

Joey: Well then, let me ask about *Stalin* being a psychopathic poet or a neurotic idealist.

Alex: I'd probably like to be a psychopathic poet. (laughs) I mean, I've been writing a poetry book since I was very, very young and stupid; I'm quite embarrassed about it. I think I wrote in another song, "Sickness Takin' Over", that poetry is 99 percent shit, because everybody thinks he's a poet and everybody thinks he can aspire to the status of being a poet. But I think poetry exists only rarely in a good idea which can give you a thrill. So there's so much shit around, and the lyrics and the books everywhere...You have to be real careful not to accept everything as gold.

Joey: How do you decide which language to communicate in?

Alex: I sing in German and English. Mostly in English. It's quite easy and I think it fits very well in this kind of music. And [I sing] in German because I am German. I've been trying also to sing in Italian, but it's not for this kind of music. [Maybe] if it was more melodic with violins.

Joey: What's next for Pankow?

Alex: We'll be writing a soundtrack for a ballet called *Theatre of Imparse*, [to be] performed in Florence at the end of June. After that, we'll start work towards our third LP, and at the same time, a new musical called *The Guardian Angels*, which is about the Guardian Angels (a civilian patrol for the subways) in New York.

(The interviewer thanks Sebastian Koch, Pankow's tour manager, Andy Wombwell of Wax Trax! and the Cabaret Metro staff)

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TOO HOT FOR LEATHER

WORD TO THE YZ

New Jersey rapper YZ pulls back from the super-hyped noise-laden standard set by Public Enemy and NWA. His sound is "pleasing to ear, not attacking the ear" while remaining true to the street. The soothing samples of Bobby Womack, Vicki Anderson and others set the listener up to be knocked cold by YZ's lyrics of fury. WHPK's JP Chill and Icebox spoke with YZ and ESD Posse members Pumice Sweet Love and B-Fine during a stop in Chicago in March on their way to Texas to film the video for "Tower with a Power".

JP: How did you get started doing this?

YZ: Back in high school, I always had the mission of making some type of record. In my senior year of high school, after doing a number of shows in the area and demo tapes, word got back to a Philadelphia dj who came to listen to some of my demos. Two weeks after that, we were in the studio making my first 12-inch, which was "I'm Bad"—the first "I'm Bad" that ever came out—and "I Am Who I Am". Five months later, LL [Cool J] came out with it (another song with the same title), and five months after him, Michael Jackson, and so on and so forth.

Icebox: Who put that out? Was that on a Philadelphia label?

YZ: No, it was on a New Jersey label called Rockin' Hard records and then I went on to the Diversity record label, which was owned by Timothy Baylor, my manager. I went on to buy into that label, and now I own half of that label.

Icebox: That's when "In Control of Things" first came out?

YZ: We put out "In Control of Things" and "Thinking of a Master Plan" and also another tune called "I'm in the Party". Tuff City [Records] came to us and they made us a deal. We worked out a nice production deal with them and now we're signed to Tuff.

Icebox: Is there anything new coming out? That 12-inch has been around for a while.

YZ: Right now I have an album done called *The Sons of the Father*, which is the ESD (East Side Division) Posse on a whole. Sons of the father—father, meaning God, and we are like the "disciples of the father." We just released another 12-inch from the album; it's called "Tower with a Power". We're going to Texas now and we're going to shoot a video while we're there on tour.

JP: Is it going to be mostly straight rap?

YZ: The album consists of anywhere from house to reggae. It's a variety of music. I use some pop tunes; I use the tune called "I'm Working", brought a pianist in and I played bass and keyboard. It's from a John Lennon tune. So it's a variety of tastes.

Icebox: You don't restrict yourself to any one area?

YZ: No, I don't. The messages are very allegorical but every now and again, I get very straightforward. The reason I do that is because I want to take the approach of not attacking the ear. I want to reach the ear and then reach the personality later.

Icebox: I noticed that just on that 12-inch, most of the tunes tend to be relatively more laid back, with slower beats and stuff like that.

YZ: What we do is think before we say, and everything we write is well-planned out. Later, I've been coming up with the outrageous concepts, very message-oriented, but I do it in a way that you really have to be into me as a person to understand what I'm talking about.

Icebox: Like the songs on the Tuff City 12-inch?

YZ: All of them are very deep except "In the Party". "In Control of Things" is very deep in an allegory sense if you really get into the words, and "On a Friday" is an anti-stereotype song. I really don't want to get into the message, I would rather for the ear to listen. But there is a deep message in all the songs. And in "Master Plan", you take some allegory approaches and then you get straightforward on other approaches and that's what I did for the 12-inch.

JP: I wanted to ask you about Tuff City and Aaron Fuchs. It seems like the label has been around forever, back to the Cold Crush Brothers, and they're doing some great things with you, Lakim Shabazz and the 45 King, but they've never had really big records, at least not nationally.

YZ: What they never had was me, YZ. I know all about Tuff City's history because I am dedicated rap fanatic myself, among other things like blues and jazz. I have a collection at home from Betsy Smith to Thelionious Monk to Robert Johnson—and I followed Tuff also. The reason we got into this big thing with Tuff is because we felt we could turn Tuff around. And that's what they needed. They needed an artist like YZ to come around to change them. Right now they're looking for a payday because they have the man to do it. I am the man to do it. And if you notice, unlike any of the other artists that Tuff has ever had, they're spending money. They're also spending a lot of time on promotion on YZ because we make the difference.

YZ stands for the Omega; we are the Final Call. We are the Sons of the Father, meaning, if you go back to the Bible, Jesus

was supposedly a son of the father, but we go past that, for we are on a whole, the Sons of the Father. We are the ending, the Omega. You'll see, this year will probably be a pretty big year for Tuff City.

Aaron [Fuchs] goes back; he's helped a lot of artists and producers, like Marley Marl. With his artists, he gives them the records to sample from. Mark the 45 King is a perfect example. He gave him the [record that was sampled in] "The 900 Number"—here it is, and Mark got all the fame from it. Whereas he doesn't have that control over us. We do what we want to do and that's it, because we're doing a good job.

JP: So what's the East Side Division?

YZ: East Side Division, we live in East Windsor. I graduated from Heights Town High School which is in East Windsor and I took a few years at Mercer County College in West Windsor. As soon as I can settle down, I'm going to go back to school, probably Rutgers or something that's in my area so I can stay close to home.

JP: Why do you think there's a division between the West Coast rappers like Ice T, NWA and all the Dr. Dre productions, who have a more gangster-oriented message and the rappers on the East Coast, who are working towards more of a nationalist message?

YZ: What it is, rap in New York goes way back to the '70s, and if you go back to the rap [then], it was very street-oriented. It didn't really have much to say and, me personally, I'm not from the streets, but I can very much be part of the streets when I have to be. And what happened was rap has grown a lot in the New York area and on the northern East Coast. They're past that [now] and they're trying to reach new plateaus of rap, whereas in the Midwest, the West and the South, it's all new to them and they're starting where rap started in New York some years ago. That's all they basically know. If you notice, a lot of the rap artists on the West Coast are starting to pay attention to what the New York rappers are doing and they're starting to take the change in dress. After the change in dress, you'll start to hear the change in message. It'll come, but it's gonna take some time.

Another thing I think of why they're doing it is they see that there's a lot of money in that type of rap in the West Coast. The companies out there are spending big money to see these negative images, whereas on the East Coast, rappers are struggling. They're really struggling because companies don't want to put in the big money. On the West Coast, rap is gigantic because companies are paying for that negative image. And what's better: what's gonna sell, the negative or the positive?

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YZ continued

People don't want to hear the preaching; they don't want to hear "Do well in school"; they don't want to hear "Don't do drugs"; they don't want to hear whatever's positive. They want to hear something negative, especially in the underground, [where] everything is negative, supposedly. But as you can see, who's putting the money in what? Rappers in New York are struggling because they're trying to do something positive. If we were to go back to the negative way of rap, then, of course, they would pick up on it. But who wants to do that? We're trying to set an example, not be an example.

We're trying to set an example, not be an example.

JP: So you don't think that the success of the street sound or the rise of Jazzy Jeff or MC Hammer will drown out people who have something more positive to say?

YZ: It's kind of funny what people call selling out. A lot of people call turning over to pop selling out. A lot of people call what NWA and those guys are doing selling out. But they're very different. I don't think there is such a thing in music as selling out, as far as the music is concerned. The person can sell out but you're very much a product of your environment. What you get from YZ and the ESD Posse is what we live. We are very much different from the people in our area, we are very much different from the people in New York or the people on the West Coast. We're setting our own trends. The area we come from is very much like the area in which you live [Hyde Park on Chicago's South Side], but we are also very street-wise, very book-wise, very culture-wise, as far as Africa is concerned.

I'd rather take things on the logical approach than attack it. You know, "let's talk about it", and that's what I do.

I like to hit Africa because that's where I am from, I like to speak about Africans because I am African and I like to speak about what Africans are going through because I have to live it. And it's more done on a cultural basis than the ignorant basis. I'd rather take



Icebox: Are you coming up with all your own samples?

YZ: I had a lot of help from Tony Depula—Tony D—he's on Island Records now. We got together and did a lot of the tracks. A lot of my ideas, his ideas, B-Fine's ideas—we just get together and we write, think of concepts. I think of concepts for Fine, he thinks of concepts for me.

JP: It seems amazing that people are running out of samples or really, not working to find new stuff. For example, the sample you used in "In Control of Things", after that came out, it seems like a dozen others came out using the same sample, like Lakim Shabazz, Big Daddy Kane and Gang Starr.

YZ: As far as sampling is concerned, we're not concerned with [it] because we're artists and not everything is sampled. I play a little piano and guitar and I've learned how to write music, so as long as I have that ability, there's always going to be something else to do. And sampling's never going to run out. I don't think, because there's a number of records that you could take anything from. As far as the artistry is concerned, there's always something to do for rappers. You could hire someone to write your music if you have to. R&B artists do that all the time. Most of the R&B artists don't write their own music or their own lyrics, they're too busy hiring everyone [else] to do it. They've basically forgotten where they came from. They down rappers when rappers are writing their own stuff, [but] when you think of R&B tunes, it's usually the same thing over and over [whereas] when you think of rap, we always hit something new.

B-Fine: If you listen to R&B, they're trying to get like rap; they use all the hip-hop beats.

YZ: Right. As far as the sound goes, they criticize the sound and yet they steal the sound. We write the lyrics and they couldn't get us there, so they tried to get us on the sampling. Sampling is an art.

Icebox: It seems that there are large sections of the scene in New York that are incestuous. Everybody seems to be on everybody else's record or producing everybody else's material. What do you think about that?

YZ: What it is, if you think about it, rappers are usually from the street, and rap is in the street, so they're too busy listening to everybody else and they're basically in tunnel vision. This is what they hear, "Hey, I like that, I'm gonna do that." Whereas we listen to us; I don't like to get into everybody else's tunes. I respect rappers as a whole but artists have to find themselves, and if you don't find yourself, then you basically sound like everyone else. And that's why we're here, to make the change. We basically listen to each other and we stay in our little realm. We listen to other people but we don't get too caught up in it.

things on the logical approach than attack it. You know, "Let's talk about it," and that's what I do. If you listen, it's very mellow, very attractive to the ear. It's not just thrown at you, it's given to you in a way that you can enjoy it and learn from it.

Icebox: Do you attribute the outlook you have to being so close to Princeton?

YZ: No, originally I was born in Paterson [New Jersey]. Paterson is very different now than when I was growing up there, and I didn't really get a chance to become that street person. I live in East Windsor and East Windsor is starting to go through a change now too. You know, all places change if you give it time. I don't give Princeton the credit, I don't give East Windsor the credit, it's just something that we've grown as a people and we're giving back what we have now. We are products of the environment but [the way] music is, artistry is very different than the environment, as far as we go. We don't try to be NWA and talk about the killings, or if we do it, we do it in a different way. We're less explicit.

JP: What do each of you do?

YZ: This man here, Pumice Sweet Love, is being trained for the road manager position. He's B-Fine's brother. B-Fine thought of "In Control of Things" and he started to write it. Then we got together and finished it. He also started another tune on the album, called "Back Again," which we also got together and finished. He's an artist too. East Side Division, like I said, are the Sons of the Father. Since I am the first Son to come out, I am the First Son. He (B-Fine) is the Second Son and he's gonna have his own album. There's a Third Son under him that will be with my brother, who's also a Third Son. Their group will be called "The Third Sons".

GUITAR GODS ON DOPE

Part One of this interview with Bullet LaVolta was with Bill Whelan (bass), Chris Cougar Guttmacher (drums) and Ken Chambers (guitar). Not present were Clay Tarver (guitar) and Yukki Gipe (vocals).

Part Two was solely with Ken Chambers (also of Moving Targets).

The interviewers are **WHPK's Mike Newirth and Anthony Star**. Date-line: Chicago, October 1989.

Anthony: *Origins of the band?*

Bill: Ken was in a band called Iron Cross. Yukki was in the Repellants and the Primates. Clay and I were never in bands before Bullet LaVolta. In the fall of 1986, we decided we wanted to start a band.

Anthony: *Did Corey (first guitarist) leave Meltdown before Bullet LaVolta started?*

Bill: No, Meltdown was kind of falling apart. Chris and Corey were in Meltdown, and Clay and I had been talking about this band we wanted to start. We had a couple of almost-songs, like "Mother Messiah" and a few others were being worked out. The first time Corey, Clay and I played together, we played in his basement and figured out "Circuits."

Anthony: *How did you find Yukki?*

Bill: We found Yukki by putting flyers in record stores and clubs. He saw it in Second Coming. We tried out two guys who were kind of losers. A bunch of people we decided against just by talking to 'em that we didn't want to see them in person. The band went along for about six months and we started doing radio tapes.

Anthony: *When did you first play?*

Bill: We first played...uh, I can't remember the date. But we'd gone into this studio called Soundloft in Brookline, and recorded "Baggage," "Autopilot" and a couple of other songs.

Mike: *I first heard "Baggage" on First Full of Hits (Taang! sampler cassette). Was that this mix?*

Bill: No, same mix.

Todd: This was before Bullet LaVolta was even signed to Taang!

Bill: We had no relationship with Taang! at that point. A week after we recorded that stuff, we went to WHRB [at Harvard] and a couple of stations in Boston and gave 'em the tapes.

Anthony: *Did you work at HRB?*

Bill: Yeah. Corey, Clay and I all worked at HRB.

Kenny: So of course it went to #1 right away. **Bill:** Yeah, for some strange reason people really loved it.



Mike: *Was that the tape called The Gun Didn't Know I Was Loaded? (Taang! compilation for the New Music Seminar)*

Bill: That came out at the end of the summer [of '87]. Corey was leaving the band and going to Italy, and we had "Baggage" from the Soundloft session, and we recorded "Metrowave" on WERS, just a pretty good live show. So we decided that we wanted to put something out before Corey left. He went to Italy for a year, and we wanted the band to keep going. I talked to Ken once and he had seen us play a couple of times, and he was into the band. That summer, we just played two or three times a month. We played with the Pagans once, we played with Redd Kross...

Todd: So Corey goes off and Ken says he's interested in joining the band.

Anthony: *What was the state of Moving Targets at that point? Was it as tentative as it always is?*

Ken: Yeah, pretty much. We had done a tour the preceding May.

Mike: *Was that when Burning in Water came out?*

Ken: Yeah, we toured to support that a few months after that came out, and the tour was a mess. We kind of broke up after we came back. Then I met Todd at a Burger King.

Todd: I was seventeen years old at the time. **Ken:** There were a couple of shows booked before Pat [Brady] left the band. Todd and I got together and we jammed with another guy, Jeff [Weigand, of the Volcano Suns], playing bass, and we did some shows during the summer [of '87].

Mike: *Were those the last Moving Targets shows?*

Ken: Well, we play once in a while. But at our last show, I actually talked to Clay and said, "Yeah, I'd like to try out because the Targets are not happening."

Mike: *I've always been curious about all that, because Bullet LaVolta and the Moving Targets are very different, and more to the point, you did all the songwriting in the Targets and you don't seem to do a lot in Bullet LaVolta. So how does that all tie in for you?*

Ken: Well, I don't know. I love the band. To be honest, they told me Corey was gone for a year and I just thought I'd be playing for a year.

Mike: *Do you miss singing and writing?*

Ken: Yeah, well, we all write songs.

Mike: *And lyrically, Bullet LaVolta seems very different from Moving Targets.*

Ken: Yes, the Moving Targets are brooding, introspective...

Mike: *Mature, Hüsker Dü-ish college rock.*

Anthony: *When exactly did you hook up with Taang!?*

Bill: After Corey left, our first show was at TT the Bear's in October. We were opening for the Lemonheads; we played really well. Curtis (head of Taang!) was completely drunk and he was like, "Wanna put a record out?" and we said "Sure!" We'll put an ep and an album out. "Sure..." And then we didn't hear anything from him for a month and a half, so we started sending tapes out, and he got all upset. Anyway, the [6-song] ep came out in May [of '88] and we did this 'tour' with the Hard-Ons for ten days, about six shows.

Anthony: *Was Chris [Guttmacher, drums] still in the band?*

Bill: During the course of that tour, Chris announced that he was going to leave the band. He wasn't really a 'road animal.'

Anthony: *What's he gone on to do?*

Bill: Well, he didn't actually leave right away. It took him about nine months. He was really cool about it, too. He was like, "I'd like to record the [second] record with you guys, if you'll let me, and I'll stick around till you find someone else."

Ken: He's going to U. Mass., Boston, right now. That was the main reason he wanted to leave. He's also left Meltdown.

Anthony: *When did you find Todd?*

Bill: Todd was actually the first drummer we'd ever played with. We tried out about two dozen other drummers.

Ken: Actually, GG Allin came down.

BULLET LAVOLTA continued

Bill: He played in another room.

Anthony: *So when did the RCA deal happen?*

Bill: *The Gift* came out on Taang! on May 25, and we went to Europe a couple of days later. In Hanover, we got a call from a RCA A&R guy named Bob Fiedler. He'd seen us play at CCBG's [in New York] in May. He bought the record, he liked it. For some reason, he was completely into the band. The last big thing he'd done at RCA was the *Dirty Dancing* soundtrack (laughs) so I guess he had some doubt. He got the president of RCA into the record, and he was like, "Yeah, you guys remind me of my youth when I was living in Detroit—the Stooges, MC5..." (Someone comes into the room) Hey, Tom! This is our manager, Tom.

Tom: Everybody's hair is getting so long. (long interlude as Mike and Anthony try to scan T-shirts from Tom, with no success) **Bill:** So we got back from Europe and talked to RCA. They were a lot cooler than the impression we had they would be. They assured us that they would take a hands-off attitude towards the band, creatively. That was the main thing we were interested in. We had no interest in major labels at all. I mean, we've never had one of these ideological things where we wanted to be an indie band for the rest of our lives; we just wanted to build up a following and get bigger. The whole indie rock thing can be very constricting; there's like a converted audience...

Ken: We didn't want to end up like Government Issue or something.

Bill: Great band.

Ken: Yeah, a band that could've gone somewhere.

Bill: There's no reason why GI shouldn't have been opening up for AC-DC.

Anthony: *Well, tonight you're opening for Soundgarden, who are in a similar position. All the major labels are now taking interest in these bands who, a couple of years ago, wouldn't have been signed.*

Bill: Well, it was a combination of things. We didn't have many options. We thought that Taang! had done a good job, but we weren't sure how much more they could do. They didn't give us any tour support, so it was impossible for us to tour. And Blast First had just gone out of business that week. SST has been teetering on the verge of collapse...

Ken: They never pay their bands.

Bill: It just seemed like RCA was willing to give us a situation that we felt comfortable with.

Anthony: *So what kind of contract did you sign with them?*

Bill: Actually, to be honest, we still have not yet signed.

Mike: *You might want to do that. How did it come about that The Gift was reissued?*

Bill: [RCA] really liked the record, and they

felt that it was a good record to introduce the band to a bigger market.

Anthony: *Did they choose the extra songs to put on?*

Bill: We all kind of felt they were the best songs off the ep to put on.

Ken: This guy who works for RCA, Alan—he was really into *Over the Shoulder*, [and] he thought that would appeal to the 'metal' market.

Mike: *What's coming next in terms of vinyl?*

Ken: In the contract that isn't signed yet, they're committed to two more records before they can drop us—if we bomb.

Mike: *Was there a lot of money involved?*

Bill: There was a comfortable amount. The way we are about money is, it's just an advance on royalties that you have to earn later. We have to have a certain amount of money to support a tour: we lose close to fifteen thousand dollars, and we have to be able to cover that. But we only want to use money that we can earn. We don't want to be one of these bands that gets a huge tour bus and goes out and makes three hundred dollars a show.

Ken: Like, uh, some bands that we're playing with tonight.

(brief interlude of mocking Soundgarden)

Bill: This is just a personal thing about how we feel comfortable doing it.

Ken: In a year, we don't want to owe RCA a hundred thousand dollars. Because then we'd have to start writing really bad songs to sell records.

Mike: *Have the perks been attracting you? Y'know, groupies, drugs, alcohol, guitars...*

Bill: The perks have been, like, breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Ken: They give us fifteen dollars a day for expenses. I mean, when we get back from touring in January, I don't think we're going to have to get jobs or anything. We'll take a few months and record a record. That's one of the nice things about it: being able to concentrate on the music.

Part Two: Kenny Chambers

Mike: *The Moving Targets are your band, who you've been playing with since 1981 or so?*

Ken: Yeah. I mean, it's not my band.

Mike: *But you're the only constant member.*

Ken: I write the songs...

Mike: *Will you be able to follow it up in the future as Bullet LaVolta gets more popular?*

Ken: Oh yeah, definitely. I hope so. We're still all friends. We practice and play shows once in a while in Boston.

Anthony: *So all the new Moving Targets stuff will be coming out on Taang!?*

Ken: Yeah. Taang! and Roadracer (a European metal label), unfortunately.

[Roadracer] are really bad. Bill and I went to their office to do some shitty interviews, and

they were like, "You can have all the records from our catalogue, whatever you want." We searched, and got two records each out of a hundred different bands. It was really horrible. We ended up selling them to Second Coming Records.

Anthony: *I have some questions about how Yukki behaves on stage...*

Mike: *As anybody named Yukki would.*

Anthony: *I guess. What inspires the way Bullet LaVolta acts and sounds?*

Ken: What inspires Yukki Gipe? I guess if I knew, I'd try to bottle it. Yukki's great. I know we're in a band together, but he's one of the best singers I've ever seen in my life. He really gets into it.

Anthony: *Once, he set his hair on fire during a show. Another time, you played this really weird show in Kendall Square [in Boston] in front of a hotel. Do you remember that show?*

Ken: Yeah, with Tribe.

Anthony: *And lots of other forgettable shit bands. Businessmen walking by, wondering what the hell is going on. Yukki tore down this WFNX (Boston radio station) banner and wrapped himself in it.*

Ken: Yeah, Yukki's wild. Everyone's into different stuff. Clay's from Texas, he's into AC-DC and shit like that. He was into punk rock when he went to Harvard. Bill, Clay and Corey all went to Harvard. I don't know, we all have different influences.

Anthony: *What do you listen to when you're driving down the road on tour?*

Ken: I'm into Roy Orbison. Yukki's got the punk rock stuff like Wire, the Stranglers.

Mike: *Any new stuff? Bands you've played with?*

Ken: Two bands we've played with. [One is] the Poster Children. They're really great, they're going to be huge. We played with them in Champaign. And this other band called Aghan Whigs, who are incredible. It was this shitty little club, more like a pizza joint, and I saw these bands soundcheck and it just blew me away.

Anthony: *So now you stop and listen more to opening bands?*

Ken: Oh yeah. I mean, I hadn't seen a band as good as these two in a year or two. So we were really lucky. I'm really cynical; most of the bands we play with strike me as really average. Mudhoney are great, too; Soundgarden are pretty average.

Mike: *Are you part of any musical 'scene' in Boston?*

Ken: Bullet LaVolta? Yeah. I mean, most of the people that followed the band at the beginning are still around. But it's not a bunch of dickheads that suddenly like us, or like, 200 of our friends. I mean, a band like the Zulus, who I really like a lot, play every couple of months or so. I went to see them last time they played, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

BULLET continued

there were all these people there who I've never seen before, generic college dickheads.

Mike: Kind of like the people who are upstairs now.

Ken: I mean, I have nothing against college kids...



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WHPK MAGAZINE #14 DISCOGRAPHY

Buzzcocks

Selected list:

Product (3 cassette/od boxed set) (Restless Retro, 1989)

The Peel Sessions Album: The Buzzcocks (Strange Fruit, 1989)

Live at the Roxy (Absolutely Free, 1989)

Lest We Forget (ROIR cassette, 1988)

"Boredom" on Burning Ambitions: A History of Punk double-album compilation (Cherry Red, 1981)

"Love You More" on Seeds IV: Punk (Cherry Red, 1987)

"Time's Up" on Short Circuit: Live at the Electric Circus compilation (Virgin UK, 1978)

"Breakdown" and "Love Battery" on The Roxy London W.C.2 compilation (Harvest, 1977)

Spiral Scratch (four-song 7") (New Hormones, 1977)

Best in Good Food (bootleg of entire Electric Circus concert of October 2, 1977)

Time's Up (bootleg of ten-song demo from 1976)

Kahil El'Zabar

Selected list:

Golden Sea (with David Murray) (Sound Aspects, 1989)

Sacred Love (with Lester Bowie, Malachi Favors and Raphael Garrett) (Sound Aspects, 1988)

Another Kind of Groove (with Billy Bang and Malachi Favors) (Sound Aspects, 1987)

The Ritual (with Lester Bowie and Malachi Favors) (Sound Aspects, 1986)

Birth of a Nation (with the Shadow Vignettes) (Sessoms Records, 1986)

YZ

Sons of the Father (Tuff City, 1990)

"Tower with a Power" & remixes (12") (Tuff City, 1990)

"Get Off the Rhythm" (with Tony D) on Break Beat—Sample This lp (SureShot, 1989)

"In Control of Things"/"Thinking of a Master Plan"/"On a Friday"/"In the Party" (as YZ-G Rock) (Diversity, 1989; re-released on Tuff City, 1989)

"I'm Bad"/"I Am Who I Am" (12") (Rockin' Hard, 1987)

Pankow

"Show You Their Dongs" (12") (Wax Trax!)

Gisela (Wax Trax!; also released as a marble/gold edition of 100 on Contempo)

Freedom for the Slaves (Wax Trax!)

Freiheit Für Die Sklaven (ZYX)

"Kunst und Wahnsinn" (12") (Contempo)

"Sickness Takin' Over" (12") (Technodrome International; also remixed on a Razormaid compilation)

"Me and My Ding Dong" (remix) (Razormaid compilation)

"Do It Anyway You Want" (12") (as Hardsonic Bottom 3) (BBAT; also remixed on a Razormaid compilation)

"Disco Inferno" (12") (as Hardsonic Bottom 3) (BBAT; also remixed on a Razormaid compilation)

Bullet LaVolta

The Gift (Taangl, 1989; reissued with 2 songs from *Bullet LaVolta* by RCA, 1989)

"Birth of Death" on Beautiful Happiness compilation (Skigaku UK, 1988)

Bullet LaVolta (6-song mini-lp) (Taangl, 1988)

WHPK MAGAZINE BACK ISSUES

The following back issues of the WHPK Magazine are available.

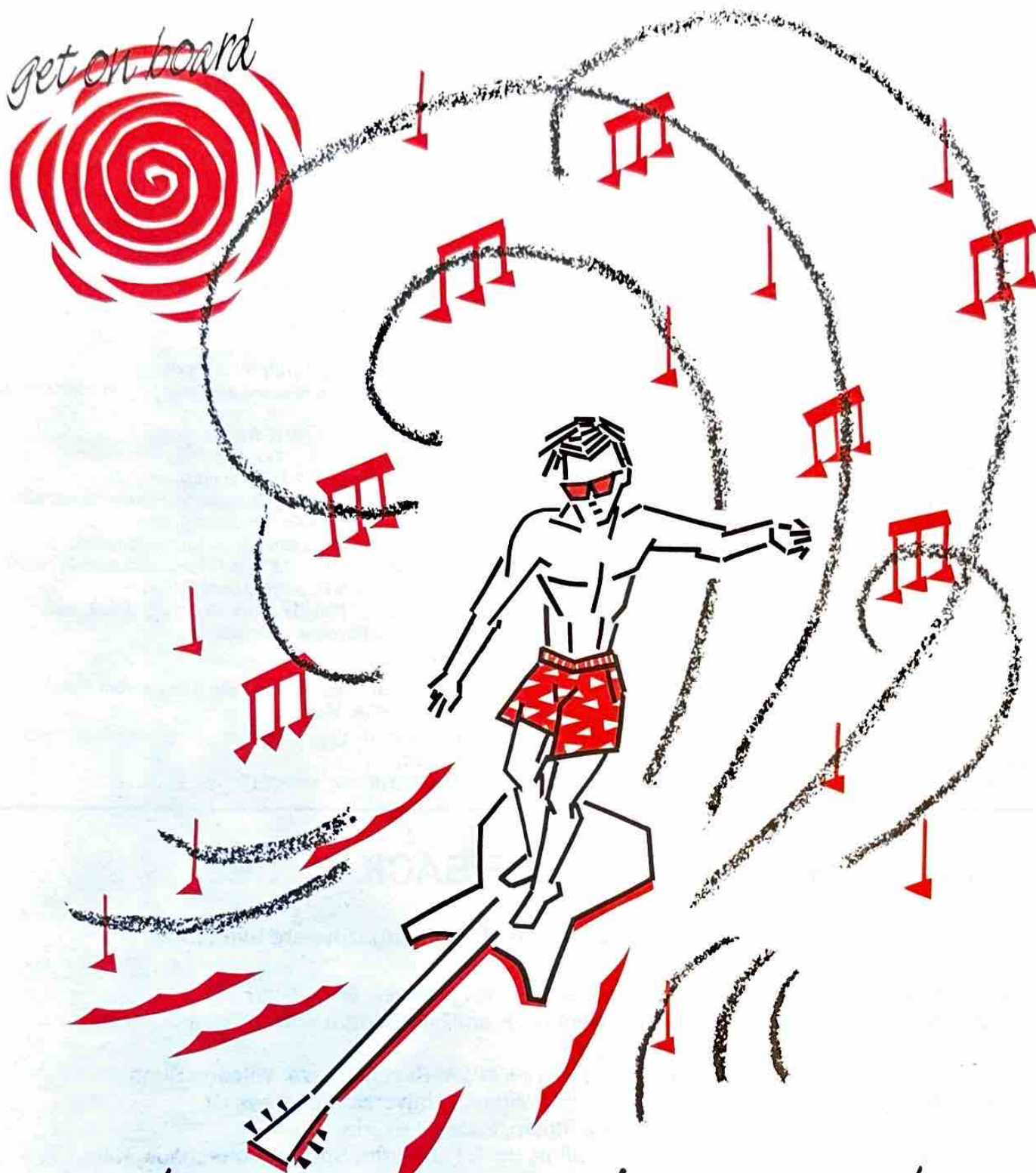
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